

COPY

November 15, 1960

Dear Jack:

I called on the Soviet Ambassador yesterday at his request, (it happened to be in Washington as I was speaking at the Women's National Democratic luncheon.) He translated to me verbally a message which he had received from Mr. Khrushchev to be delivered to me personally.

In this message the Ambassador was instructed to give me Mr. Khrushchev's greetings and congratulations on his behalf over the victory of the Democratic Party. The message then continued as follows:

"As Mr. Harriman could see for himself, Mr. Khrushchev had criticized Mr. Kennedy as well as Mr. Nixon, in accordance with the suggestion Mr. Harriman had made." (This undoubtedly refers to an oral message I had sent to him, that if he wanted to elect Nixon, the surest way to do so was to criticize Nixon and express approval of Kennedy.) "Some of the statements of both candidates were unfavorably commented on in the Soviet press, though the criticisms of Nixon were a stronger rebuff. Mr. Khrushchev and his colleagues in the Soviet government understood the need for anti-Soviet statements during the campaign, and for that reason they had shown restraint in overlooking them.

"Mr. Khrushchev knows that Mr. Harriman has always paid attention to Soviet-American relations, and Mr. Khrushchev believes there may now be a better chance of improving them.

"The task of today is that there must be some realistic way found to improve our mutual relations. Also, solutions must be found to the pressing international issues, such as strengthening peace in Europe, disarmament, and others. So far as our (Soviet) side is concerned, there will be no lack of attempt and desire to reach a positive result. If the leading people of both countries could unite to act in the same direction to achieve mutual goals, then we (Soviets) can say with all confidence that things will proceed 'not too badly.' (This is a Russian colloquialism.)

"Mr. Khrushchev hopes that Mr. Harriman agrees with this. Of course he may ask what is meant by 'not too badly'. What criteria should be chosen? Mr. Khrushchev tried to convey the thought in his message to Senator Kennedy by saying he

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hoped we could follow the line of relations that existed during President Roosevelt's time, when Mr. Harriman was Ambassador. Mr. Khrushchev has been thinking over the question of whether under present conditions this can be achieved. He has come to the conclusion that it is not only desirable but possible. With a return to the spirit of Soviet-American co-operation which we had during the war, not only would the people of both countries gain, but so would the people of other countries and no one would lose."

This is a rough translation, but the essence is clear. Its style shows that it was written by Khrushchev himself. It is further indication that Khrushchev wants to make a fresh start.

I said to the Ambassador that if Mr. Khrushchev was in earnest, I hoped he would think about things he could do to pave the way for improved relations. I said it would be well for Mr. Khrushchev not to refer to the U-2 incident again, and on the positive side, to make some gesture such as the release of the RB-47 crew.

Menshikov accused me of trying to trade with him. I denied that, and pointed out that Mr. Khrushchev should realize that after the kind of things he had been saying publicly, some act on his part to show the American people that he was having a change of heart would be helpful.

Menshikov expressed the hope that we could come to some agreement on disarmament and nuclear control, as without such control China and other countries would obtain nuclear weapons in a few years, with attendant increase in the danger of nuclear war.

When I asked Menshikov how things were going with China, he shied away from the question, maintaining there were no fundamental differences. However, he said he thought it would not be difficult to get China to agree to disarmament proposals, if we had reached an agreement.

I asked him what Mr. Khrushchev meant by a return to the relations we had during the time of President Roosevelt, but he obviously was not instructed and he wouldn't commit himself. I repeated what I had said to Mr. Korneichuk (My letter to you of November 12), that you would undoubtedly develop a good neighbor policy towards the underdeveloped countries, which would make more difficult the realization of Mr. Khrushchev's ambitions to communize them; also, that I believed you would want, if possible, to come to an understanding with Mr. Khrushchev for our mutual benefit, but that you would not appease nor make any compromises of principle.

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This message is intriguing in that it was obviously written by Khrushchev himself. During the war I found out I couldn't get anywhere on matters of importance without getting to Stalin himself. Undoubtedly the same situation exists today with Khrushchev. He did, in fact, come to my house when he was in New York a year ago, even though he knew that in my articles I had been blunt in my criticisms of Soviet policies as well as of him.

Sincerely,

/s/ Averell

The Honorable John F. Kennedy
Palm Beach
Florida